MEDITATIONS ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

SADHU SUNDAR SINGH

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VARIOUS ASPECTS
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MEDITATIONS
ON
VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

BY
SADHU SUNDAR SINGH
AUTHOR OF
"AT THE MASTER'S FEET," "REALITY AND RELIGION,"
'THE SEARCH AFTER REALITY," ETC.

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FOREWORD

In order to appreciate the value of these simple addresses and often quaint illustrations one should have seen the Sadhu, or at any rate have read his interesting Life. An Eastern ascetic, clad in his saffron robe, and like the old Friars, dependent on charity, this man has succeeded in winning a hearing for Jesus Christ among Indians which He never had before.

I took the Chair for him at the Church House when he came to address the Clergy of the diocese of London, and I was immensely impressed by his striking appearance and by the simpleness and yet supernatural power of his address.

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You must remember that this man has borne persecution and hardships of every kind for his faith; he has lived with wild beasts; he has been entombed alive, and yet he has kept the calm unruffled faith which breathes through the chapters which form this little book.

I hope the perusal of it will lead its readers to study more carefully the character and life of one like the Sadhu, for it is only when Christianity is represented in its Eastern dress that it is likely to win for Christ the allegiance of our Indian fellow-subjects.

A. F. LONDON.

Fulham Palace, S.W.

PREFACE

In this little book I have put down a few meditations on various aspects of our spiritual life, and have dealt with those difficulties which every man of God will necessarily meet with as he passes through the different stages of his spiritual life.

Possibly all may not agree with my views on some of the questions dealt with. It would be strange if they did. For as no two men are exactly alike in form and feature, and as all are not equal in their powers of hearing or seeing, so each man's apprehension of spiritual truth will be conditioned by his temperament, his experience, and his spiritual outlook. It is not likely that there

will be divergent views on fundamental principles, but there very probably will be on non-essential points. For God in revealing His Will takes each man's spiritual state and capacity into account. Hence what may seem to one as in advance of the times may to another appear to be out of date and unnecessary.

Further, many fail to grasp the meaning of those God-revealed facts, which some man, living in union with God and illuminated by Him, has recorded. Without having had any very definite experience of enjoying God themselves, they set out to champion their doctrines about Him, and fight over the husks of non-essentials as dogs do over dry bones. But those who have enjoyed fellowship and union with God and have been lifted above these unprofitable wranglings, bring out of the storehouse of their own personal experience " things new and old "

to which they testify without a thought as to whether others will agree or not.

My sincere thanks are due to the Rev. T. E. Riddle, who has again assisted me in translating this book from Urdu into English; and also to Miss E. Sanders for her great help in reading and correcting the proof.

SUNDAR SINGH.

SUBATHU, SIMLA HILLS,
August 1925.

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CHAPTER I

ALONE WITH THE MASTER

1. It was not for rest alone that the Master took His three chosen disciples to the mountain top. It was that there they might catch a glimpse of the reality of the glory of His divine nature, for the revelation of which their daily contact with Him had been a preparation. They had seen His miracles, and had heard those wonderful words, which no man ever before had spoken; but more was needed than that they should stay there in adoration and amazed wonder. It was very necessary that they should leave their crowded days, and in the mountain's quiet solitude contemplate the transcendent glory of His divine Person. Again, the trans-

figuring of His earthly form was not enough in itself. It was necessary, too, that their eyes should be opened, for without the opening of their spiritual eyes, neither could they have seen Christ's face, nor could they have discerned the presence with them of Moses and of Elias. So, also, they had to have their ears opened, for without those opened ears they could not have heard of "His decease which He should accomplish", nor even have heard the voice of God Himself, which said, "Hear Him" (Luke ix. 28-36).

God became man in Christ, and speaks to us through Him, and we must follow Him in all obedience without asking How? or Why? But we can never hear His sweet voice until we have closed our ears to the distracting voices of the world, nor can we meet and have fellowship with Him till we desire it with our whole hearts. If we ourselves are not silent, we cannot hear what others are saying, nor can we understand them fully, unless we give them our full attention. So, to hear the voice of our

Heavenly Father, we must wait in silence before Him with our whole mind and heart intent on Him; for He still reveals Himself to those who diligently seek Him. And not only this, but those who so seek will have the privilege of the communion of saints, as did those three apostles who, through their connection with Him, enjoyed the fellowship of Moses and Elias.

2. Nor must we seek this holy fellowship merely as a means of worldly advancement, as did those two disciples who petitioned for positions on the right and left of the King, when He should come in His glorious Kingdom (Mark x. 35-37). Contrast with this the better way of Mary, who sought not an exalted position by the throne, but was content to sit at the feet of the Lord Himself, and hear His life-giving words. So did she choose "that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke x. 39-42).

3. In meditation God speaks to our hearts, but not by words, and if we humbly bring our hearts to Him, the Well-spring of all

Life, He will flow into us with all the fullness of His Presence. As the spring fills the vessel placed beneath its overflow, so do the spirit and the true peace of God flow into the heart of him who makes his heart lowly to receive them.

Hugo has said: "The way to ascend to God is to descend into oneself".

"I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isaiah lvii. 15).

Hylton has these words: "Christ is lost like the piece of money in the parable, but where? In thy house, that is, in thy soul. Thou needest not run to Rome or Jerusalem to seek Him. He sleepeth in thy heart, as He did in the ship; awaken Him with the loud cry of thy desire. Howbeit I believe that thou sleepest oftener to Him than He to thee."

So, after we have climbed into the solitude of the mountain of prayer, and have there met with Him, we are not to waste our time, as those disciples wished to do, in planning

and building shelters, but, with our new-found power, we are to go back to the world of men to complete the work that has been given us to do.

CHAPTER II

MAN'S CRAVING FOR GOD

1. From our experience we know how strong is the desire for God that is born in our hearts. As the hart is distressed till it finds the water-spring in the jungle, so the heart of man thirsts for God, and is restless till it finds Him. Although, in many ways, man tries to satisfy this inborn longing of his heart, yet this desire is never satisfied till he finds God. Only in Him Who has created both the heart and its desire can there be complete satisfaction. Homer has said: "As young birds open their mouths for food, so all men crave for the gods".

Once on a journey in the Hills I sat

down to rest on a rock. Below the rock was a bush in which was a bird's nest, from which I heard the cry of the young birds. I saw that the mother-bird had come with food for them, and as soon as they heard the rustling of her wings they began to cry out, but when the mother had given them food, and had flown away, they were all quiet again. I went down to see the nest and found that, though they were not old enough to have their eyes open, yet without seeing their mother they used to open their mouths at her approach. Had they said, "Until we shall see our mother or our food, we shall never open our mouths, for we do not know if it is our mother or an enemy; or if she has in her mouth food or poison," then they would certainly not have had an opportunity, for before their eyes had opened they would have died of hunger. But they had no kind of doubt about their mother's love, and, after a few days, when their eyes would open, they would be happy in seeing their dear mother, and, growing stronger and stronger

in her likeness, before long would be able to fly away in the open air.

Let us consider if we, who are called the noblest of all creatures, are not inferior to these insignificant nestlings, for often we have had doubt in our minds about the existence and love of our Heavenly Father. Jesus said, " Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed " (John xx. 29). We, who open our hearts for God, receive from Him spiritual food, and, in time, shall reach our full size, and, when we see Him face to face, we shall be happy in His presence for ever.

2. A story is told of a wise man who met three men on the road. The first man was pale and withered and stricken with fear. He asked him, " How is it that you are in such an evil state? " He answered, " The thought always troubles me that I may be cast into the fire of hell." The sage said, " It is very sad that instead of the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, you have fear of a created thing (hell-fire). Your

worship is not true. It is a kind of bribe which you offer in the hope of saving yourself from hell-fire."

The second man sat consumed with grief and anxiety. The sage asked, "Why are you so sad and full of grief?" He replied, "I dread lest I should be deprived of the joy and rest of heaven." The wise man answered, "It is a shame that you have left the thought of the Creator, and His wonderful love, and only worship God out of a desire to gain heaven, which was created by Him."

After talking with these two men he met a third, who was very happy and contented. He asked him, "What is the secret of your joy and peace?" He said, "My constant prayer to Him, Who taught me to worship God in spirit and in truth, is, that He may grant me that I may love Him with heart and soul, and may serve and worship Him by love alone. Should I worship Him from fear of hell, may I be cast into it. Should I serve Him from desire of gaining heaven, may He keep me out; but should I worship

Him from love alone, may He reveal Himself to me, that my whole heart may be filled with His love and presence."

3. If, instead of seeking God, we set our hearts on getting His created things, and try to gain material things instead of Him, then we have indeed forsaken the Creator of all things. But the time will come when we shall leave even the created things, and nothing will remain except our sin-blighted and worthless lives. But if we turn away our hearts from all material things, and turn to God, then with Him we shall get all other things. The worldly man, who seeks not God but self, will in the end find that nothing remains for him save his punishment and his unblessed life. In seeking himself he loses all. He neither finds God nor does he find himself.

CHAPTER III

IS GOD KNOWABLE?

1. Atheists deny the existence of God, but none of them can prove that there is no God. If, for the time being, we were to admit that the atheists' unsupported contention is true, it would only add further proof of their ignorance rather than of their wisdom and truth; because if, as they say, there is no God, then it is useless to waste time in attempting to prove the non-existence of that which does not really exist. Thus to waste time that might be more profitably spent at other things is nothing but foolishness. If God exists—as all spiritually enlightened men well know that He does—then it is still greater foolishness to try to

prove concerning this Creator and Father of all that He does not exist. " The fool hath said in his heart, ' There is no God ' " (Ps. xiv. 1). By asserting this he does not prove the non-existence of God at all, but proves his own spiritual blindness, and his inability to know Him. As he puts forward his convincing reasons he will be like a feeble insect, trying by the force of its arguments to prove the non-existence of the sun—reasons which would be without force for all save one born blind.

But one may argue that, if in our belief in any personality or thing we spread harmful superstitions, then it is our duty to try to eliminate such beliefs. But has a belief in God ever been a cause of harm to any one? Never! On the other hand, unnumbered blessings flowing out of the fear and love of God have enriched believers. There can be no greater folly than to write or speak against the Spring of All Life, for, by doing so, not only do we dishonour Him, and sin against Him, but we deprive others of the

knowledge of the true nature of God, and involve them as well as ourselves in destruction.

2. Agnostics neither believe in the existence of God, nor do they disbelieve. They say we neither know, nor can we know. But this is a mistake, for every desire that we have is given for a special purpose, and we should have had created in us no desire to believe in God, unless He truly exists Who can meet that desire.

Although born from a mother, a child has a distinct existence of his own. In his own little way he loves his mother dearly, but he does not know his mother as well as she knows and loves him. As he develops he gets to know her better, and is able to enter more fully into the enjoyment of her society. In the same way, our knowledge would have to be infinite for us to know the Infinite God as we should, but this does not mean that we can never know Him at all, for at all phases of our progress we can know Him, and can enjoy His life-giving presence. For the present what need is there to know more

than this? While, in all the future, as we continue to grow in spiritual stature, so we shall continue to learn more and more of Him. There is no reason for us to be impatient, if, in our present state, we do not understand Him fully, because there is infinite time before us in which to know the Infinite God. If we walk according to the light that we have, it is enough for the present for us to know Him in relation to the needs of that phase of our progress to which we have now reached.

3. If it were necessary for us at our present stage to know God perfectly, then He would have provided to meet that need; for God always makes provision of that which is good and useful to meet His creatures' actual need. He wants, too, that we may perseveringly try to know more of Him, because it is more profitable for us to try to learn by ourselves, through the urge of our own interest, than that we should have knowledge of Him given to us cut and dried. Marcel says: "What the learner

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discovers by mental exertion is better known than what is told to him". We can reach only a partial knowledge of anything, and never know it as it really is until we have thought it through in our own consciousness. "He who would know before he believeth cometh never to the true knowledge. . . . I speak of a certain truth which it is possible to know by experience, but which ye must believe in before ye know it by experience else ye will never come to know it truly" (*Theologia Germanica*).

Some philosophers say that God is unknowable. This again is meaningless, because the very knowledge that He is unknowable is itself based on an inference from the limited knowledge of Him that they possess. Because if God is beyond our knowledge, then how has the knowledge that He is unknowable come to us? "The existence of knowledge is, in fact, affirmed in the very act of its denial."

4. Apart altogether from our knowledge of the Being of God, what we know of the

insignificant created things around us is very partial. We know, perhaps, a few of their outward characteristics, but nothing of their real inner lives, and, indeed, we know next to nothing of our own selves. If a man could obtain full knowledge of his own being, then there would be little difficulty in knowing God, in Whose likeness he has been created. The mutual relation between God and man is such, that, in order to know one it is necessary to know the other. " We can only know what is akin to ourselves", and had man not been made like God he could never aspire to know Him. Some one has said: " It is proved that God can be known only by God". And God became man that He might take away man's fallen nature, and restore him to his real nature (Ps. lxxxii. 6). As Saint Athanase has said: " He became man that we might be made God".

God lifted men out of their fallen state, and made them His messengers and flames of fire (Heb. i. 7). God is Spirit and Fire

(Matt. iii. 11). To become like flames of fire means to become like God, because " the smallest flame has all the quality of fire ". But this does not mean that God and Man are one Spirit, as is held by those Pantheists and Philosophers who say " that the various souls or selves are mere fragmentary manifestations of the Absolute ". The commingling of God with His creation does not satisfy the craving of the soul, but we find real and eternal happiness in His communion and fellowship.

5. God never discourages any seeker after truth by saying that he or his beliefs are wrong, but He so orders it that by degrees the man himself learns to recognise his errors and distinguish the truth. The story is told of a poor grass-cutter who found a beautiful stone in the jungle. He had often heard about diamonds, and thought this was one. He took it to the jeweller's shop and showed it with delight to the jeweller. Being a kind and sympathetic man, the jeweller saw that if he were to tell the

grass-cutter that his stone was not a diamond, either he would not believe it, or it would be such a shock to him that his whole hope would be brought down to the dust. The jeweller, therefore, laid his plans so that the poor man might find out his mistake for himself. He gave him some work in his shop, and kept him there till he began to be able to distinguish the varieties of diamonds and their prices. Then the jeweller told him to bring along his stone. Up till this time the grass-cutter had kept it carefully hidden away in a box. He now opened it out, and saw with amazement that it was worthless. He turned pale, and came and fell at the feet of his kind master, and said, "I am very thankful for your goodness and sympathy. You did not destroy my hope, but made such a plan that I now know my mistake without any one's help. Now I want to stay always with such a master, and spend the rest of my life in your service." This is how God brings back to the way of truth those who have

wandered away into error, so that when they learn the truth for themselves they will follow Him, and give Him the service of their whole lives.

6. People are often so foolish and ignorant that they imagine they are conferring a great favour on God, and on His ministers, when they attend the worship of His house. But those who go to worship with such an idea can have no appreciation of the real nature of God. They are like those foolish professional beggars who are ignorant of the motive of him who gives them bread to relieve their hunger. Instead of being thankful to him they think they have done him a great favour by giving him an opportunity to add to the merit of his good deeds by giving alms to the poor. They are such fools that they do not know that they have done themselves, and their appetites, a great favour, and from the bottom of their hearts should be thankful to him who has relieved their hunger.

7. The Creator has given to man intellect,

feeling, and the will. To get strength to serve God a man needs to chew his spiritual food with the teeth of intellect, but instead of using his intellectual powers wisely he often wastes them on vain speculations. A dog that finds a dry bone often gnaws it till it lacerates his mouth. Then as he gets the taste of the blood for a time he keeps on gnawing with relish, without knowing that it is his own blood; so, too, man wastes his God-given intellectual gifts on useless speculations. Spiritual feelings have also been given that he may feel and enjoy God's presence, but, through the deadening influence of disobedience and sin, he loses his perception of God and his capacity to enjoy Him. Such people do not see beyond their selfish selves, and have no feeling at all for the presence of God. Hence in the end they become confirmed in their disbelief in God. In the same way, if man's will follows a course contrary to the will of God it becomes enslaved to sin, and, not being free, leads on to spiritual suicide.

8. The water of a river that rises in one land flows through many different territories before it returns to the sea from which it was originally drawn. It passes within the borders of many chiefs and rajahs and princes. Yet no one can stop it within his territories, for it is not his possession. It is the common property of all, and wherever it goes it quenches the thirst of all. So, too, the stream of the water of life comes forth from the infinite ocean of God, and flowing through the divine channels of prophets and apostles irrigates the whole world, quenching the thirst of all and enriching and making fruitful the lives of all peoples and nations. "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17).

CHAPTER IV

PAIN AND SUFFERING

1. In the world there is spiritual as well as bodily pain. Spiritual pain is the result of sin and separation from God, while bodily pain comes from some physical sickness or injury. All living creatures suffer in proportion to the development of their organs of sense, but not to the same degree as man, whose feelings and higher intellectual powers add immensely to his capacity for suffering, because whenever he imagines he has pain his actual sufferings are increased to that extent.

Usually the teeth, claws, and beaks of birds and beasts of prey are such that it is scarcely possible for their victims to escape from

them, so the prey is killed at once without excessive pain, and saved from the suffering that would follow were it to escape wounded. Then, again, the poison of snakes and of venomous insects gets into the blood, and causes such numbness that death ensues without pain. In Nature, except in a few extraordinary circumstances, death usually occurs without any excessive pain, because at the time of death the victims are only semi-conscious, either through the effect of the poison, or from the shock of the wound. In short, their state is really not as evil as we often imagine it to be, but pain and suffering that is the result of either physical or spiritual evil is indeed agonising.

2. Pain and suffering is often necessary for our life's spiritual progress and growth, and it is not the Will of God that we should always escape from it. Many things seem bitter and bad to the taste, which really are very useful to us. We may even go so far as to say that every poison and unpalatably

bitter thing acts as a remedy, or as a specific, in some disease or other. We call them poisons through ignorance of their real medicinal properties, but God has created everything for the completion of some special purpose, and for their purpose they are sufficient, but, as we are ignorant of their exact application, our use of them often results in injury. And God has not created anything which is in itself injurious or evil, or which can harm any of His creatures if rightly used. Likewise all pain and suffering is a means of growth and of deepening to spiritual lives (Rom. viii. 18). Poisonous and injurious effects in our lives are brought about by the perverted use of powers and abilities which God has given, but especially by disobedience.

3. Pain and suffering is not only a most useful means of awakening man to his spiritual state, but is profitable for those who are helping him in his trouble, because it gives them, too, the opportunity for exercising those distinctive qualities that are

necessary for their own growth towards perfection. And the real victory is not that we should be saved from pain and suffering or death and evil, but that, by the grace of God, we may change pain into ease, the cross and death into life, and evil into good. For this reason alone are we thrust into this warfare and struggle, for " we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God " (Acts xiv. 22). The real value of ease cannot be appreciated without having known pain, nor of sweetness without having tasted bitterness, nor of good without having seen evil, nor even of life without having passed through death. Therefore it is God's Will that before we enter, with Him, into His Kingdom to enjoy Him eternally we must have passed through all these, and have learned from our experience a lesson for eternity.

4. Before the pearl has been slowly built up the pearl oyster has to undergo great suffering. " Mother o' pearl, or Nacre, tortured by the intrusion of some living

thing, a boring parasite, a worm, or a small fish, or of a grain of sand, or other inorganic substance, and without means to free itself, the Mollusc perforce neutralises the irritant matter by converting it into an object of beauty." Pearls are the product of pain and suffering; still when treated with neglect their lustre is destroyed. "Their charm, which is due to a peculiar surface play of light, might be destroyed by contamination with grease, ink, or similar matter." Sometimes in ancient tombs pearls have been laid away with the corpse, but they too have decayed and mingled their dust with the dead. So, like the pain-born pearl, spiritual life, without pain and suffering, cannot become beautiful. And even when we have reached that state of beauty, there is still fear that we will fall from that high state, and lose our lustre, if, with humble and thankful hearts, we do not always cling in love to the Lord (1 Cor. x. 12). Hence for us it is needful always to watch and to pray.

5. As diamonds and other precious stones pass through hundreds of thousands of years in heat and cold and pressure in Nature's laboratory before they reach their perfection of beauty, so must we pass through pain and suffering before we can be perfected. And though chemists can make diamonds and other precious stones artificially, yet when we apply careful tests to them we see their defects. So we cannot reach in a single day to such perfection that we will have no defects in us, but by continually living in nearness to, and in the presence of our Heavenly Father, we will become perfect even as He is perfect.

6. Rain and wind storms may seem to be destructive, yet they are really blessings in disguise, for they clear away all kinds of deadly germs of plagues and diseases and bring health to us. In the same way, the wind of the Holy Spirit (John iii. 8), and the shock of the storm of pain and suffering, bring spiritual health and blessing to us.

Again, the heat of the sun draws up water vapour to form clouds, which come back to us as rain, so, too, the Sun of Righteousness brings life to us by causing those streams of living water to flow into our spiritual lives.

7. A great many people do not know that the heart's craving, in this world and the next, can be met in God alone. Some of them—philosophers as well as the immoral and the criminal—when they have failed to find any kind of satisfaction in the world, have become hopeless and have tried to end it all by taking their own lives. At the opposite extreme to this, we see true Christian believers. They suffer much in this world because the higher they grow in their spiritual experience the greater are the difficulties that arise. The worldly-minded man altogether fails to understand this, so instead of giving them help he often opposes and persecutes them. But still they are not reduced to the suicide of despair, for in the very act of denying their worldly ambitions they find

peace in communion with God. But though all man's spiritual cravings are satisfied in God, he still longs for the friendship and sympathy of his fellow-men, and where this instinct for social fellowship is not satisfied, the Christ, Who is both God and Man, meets the cravings of his social as well as of his spiritual nature. For His understanding of the difficulties and sufferings of man springs, not from His divine nature only, but from His personal experience when He Himself suffered as a man, which enables Him now to give perfect help and sympathy to all troubled sons of men.

8. In this world spiritually-minded men suffer (2 Tim. iii. 12) because they are misunderstood by others who are unable to appreciate the truth, and have their natures warped, and their spiritual discernment deadened by the sin in them. When men of this class meet a good man, they find that his nature is incompatible with their natures, and instinctively feel impelled to take up an antagonistic attitude to him. But that man,

whose feelings and conscience are alive to God, in coming in contact with a like-minded man, recognises the God-life that is in him and is drawn towards him.

The true Christian's life is like sandal-wood, which imparts its fragrance to the axe which cuts it without doing it any harm. God's warning to Henry Suso, " Thou shalt suffer publicly the loss of thy good name, and where thou shalt look for love and faithfulness there shalt thou find treachery and suffering ", has been repeated in the experience of multitudes of Christians. In this world in which all godly prophets and apostles, and even the Lord Himself, have had to suffer, if one wishes to escape suffering he will have to deny the truth, and turn away his face from God, and make friends with the world. On the other hand, the honour of sharing in " the fellowship of His sufferings " with the Lord Himself (Phil. iii. 10) is a great privilege. Finally, when the appointed time comes, he who truly shares in the sufferings of His Lord will

enter into the eternal glory, and reign with Him (2 Tim. ii. 12).

9. Before we can reach our destined goal we shall have to pass through pain, suffering, and temptation. All these states are necessary for the growth of our spiritual lives and for our future welfare, hence it is God's Will that we should pass through them. If this had not been God's plan for us, He would not have required it of us. But if He does, then who are we to oppose Him? There is nothing more to be said. We must gladly accept whatever falls to our lot, and must not give place in our hearts to any kind of doubt which, by raising a barrier between us and God, destroys our capacity for enjoying His presence and fellowship.

As long as we are in the world we shall have to bear pain and suffering. The bee not only collects honey: it has a sting as well for some special purpose of its own. The thorns on the beautiful and fragrant rose are not put there without a purpose. Paul's thorn in the flesh, too, was given for

the fulfilment of some great and wise plan. It is very necessary, also, that we should pass through these testing times for the fulfilling of that eternal purpose for which we have been created.

CHAPTER V

OPPOSITION AND CRITICISM

1. If people fail to understand us, and criticise our good motives, or if they through misunderstanding oppose and persecute us, it would be no new or surprising event. There are crowds of people who do not even know their own purpose in life, otherwise they would have no leisure to waste in interfering in the business of others. Those who understand God's purpose in their lives have always their set task to do, and they are indifferent as to what people think and say about them, for the God to whom they must give their account knows their good motives and keeps them in His love and comfort. When our Creator and Lord knows our good

intentions, then why should we be troubled about opposition, especially when we know that a time will come when He will make clear the good purpose of our whole lives.

When a man goes to a foreign country, then the people stare at him, and the dogs bark at him. So the true Christian does not belong to this world. He is a pilgrim and a stranger (John xvii. 14; Heb. xi. 13), so he should not be surprised and disheartened if the dogs of the world think him a stranger, and bark at him, or perhaps even tear him (Matt. vii. 6). "The dogs bark but the caravan moves on." The dogs follow barking for a while, and then turn back, but the caravan moves on and sooner or later arrives at its destination.

2. There is no appointed duty that has been given to critics hostile to the Truth. Perhaps they once had their instructions, but now they have lost their commission through their failure to carry it through, and when God's work had been taken from them, and they had nothing else to do, to

provide work for their idle hands they began to amuse themselves by throwing stones at those doing God's work. Satan had found them idle and had given them his commission!

If a blind man comes groping along the road, it is only fair that a man who can see should step aside and avoid bumping into him; and if the blind man, by accident, bumps into him he should not be offended, but should help him along. Should he get annoyed about it, it only proves that he is even more blind than the blind man himself, for he is blind in the lack of all ordinary common sense and sympathy. So if any one persecutes us because we follow the truth, instead of being offended with him we should forgive him, and in love pray for him (Matt. v. 44-45), and if, even in spite of this, he does not respond and give up his opposition, we lose nothing because we did it for the sake of that Truth, Who has given us our sight and Who is Himself our Portion and our Reward.

3. In snow regions bears and some other animals feed up in summer time, and store away fat in their bodies, then when winter comes, and for several months food is unobtainable, they live on that store of fat. In a like way, through prayer we get a store of food and strength from God, and when the time of persecution comes we are kept strong and unshaken. When the opposition to our Lord was carried to such an extent that they nailed Him to the Cross (Acts iii. 15), then what are we that we should shrink from persecution? "He came unto His own, but His own received Him not."

Once a merchant went to live in a foreign country. Soon after he had left, a son was born in his house, but the mother died. From time to time the merchant sent money to his relations for the child's expenses. Years later, when the boy had grown up, his father came back in the night, and knocking at the door awakened him. On seeing the stranger the young man thought

he was a thief, and spoke to him rudely. Over and over again the merchant tried to explain that he was his father, but the young man had never seen his father, and had no knowledge of him or of his love. He attacked and wounded him and gave him over to the police. Next morning, in the investigation, it was proved that he was truly the long-absent parent. Then the young man was filled with remorse. He beat his breast and cried and earnestly pleaded for forgiveness, and promised that, in future, he would never fail to serve him obediently. The end of the story is that the young man was ashamed of the dishonour he had shown to his father and asked forgiveness; but among us there are hundreds of thousands who, even now, do not repent and turn to our Heavenly Father. Let us in sorrow for their hard-heartedness pray that God will reveal Himself to them in mercy.

4. There are many who never see their own defects and shortcomings, but who are

for ever looking for faults in others. The eye that sees all external objects sees neither itself nor its defects, so the opponents of truth see everything except their own faults. When we look into a glass the eye sees itself and its defects, so by living in the fellowship of the Word-made-flesh, and by measuring our lives by God's written Word, we can truly know ourselves. And not only will He show us our state of sinfulness, but will reveal Himself to us in healing and saving power. Then, if we in obedience turn to Him, and, continuing in prayer, live in His holy fellowship, He will take away our defects and transform us into His glorious image for all eternity, that we may also share with Him in His glory (John xiv. 26; xvii. 24).

CHAPTER VI

WHAT IS EVIL?

1. "EVIL is unnatural and a contradiction of the law of our being" (Whichcote).

"All evil is done with the object of gaining some good, and no one does evil as evil." No sensible man with his eyes open, however bad or wicked he may be, seeks to injure himself. Evil is not an inherent attribute of anything that God has created. It destroys man, and its poisonous effect, which encompasses the destruction of others, will itself destroy it eternally. Eternal permanence is essentially connected with goodness, which is one of the attributes of the Eternal God. Only if Evil were the attribute of an eternal being could it have been

eternal. If we say that Evil is an attribute of Satan then this is also false, because he was also created in a state of innocence, and his present state of evil arose in him through the exercise of his own free will. Now as Evil is not eternal—it has had a beginning, and it must also have an end—we must conclude that Evil will come to an end, and especially can we say this because it is self-destructive.

2. A Chinese philosopher, Chu Fu Tsu, writes that " at birth man is like a spring of clear water, which, on its course through mountains and plains picks up earth and mud, and becomes dirty, but if it is dammed at any place the mud settles, and it becomes clear again ". Mencius has said the spirit is like a grain of wheat, which is by nature not evil, but when sown it is dependent on soil, water, and manure, and on the conditions of its environment. In other words, man is good by nature and birth, but environment makes him bad.

From one point of view this is entirely

correct, but we cannot deny the hereditary taint of sin, and the inclination of our natures towards evil. Let us take, for example, the case of children whom we call innocent. Herbert Spencer has said: "The popular idea that children are innocent, while it is true with respect to evil knowledge, is totally false with respect to evil impulses, as half an hour's observation in the nursery will prove to any one".

3. When a man feels hunger and thirst of soul, and in his ignorance tries to satisfy himself by unlawful participation in sin, the end he reaches is that, in disobeying God, he destroys both his appetite and himself, and fails to get the satisfaction he seeks. Once it happened in the Himalayas that a famished traveller found a beautiful and tempting fruit. He ravenously ate it up, but it was poisonous, and both the hungry one, who thus sought to satisfy himself, and the hunger which tormented him were ended for ever by death.

4. In any wound or disease in the body

a struggle goes on between the two kinds of minute germs which are the responsible cause of bodily health or disease; and those win in the contest that increase most in number and strength. If the germs of disease are defeated, then there is a victory for those of health. So is it in the conflict between good and evil thoughts in men, and between good and evil men in the world. If in the hour of temptation good thoughts are victorious over the evil ones the result is spiritual health and true happiness.

The time will surely come when, through the grace of God, men will gain an absolute and eternal victory over sin, and evil will be wiped out for ever.

CHAPTER VII

THE EFFECT OF EVIL THOUGHTS AND LIVES

1. "THE evil suggestion or thought of a bad companion is like the insect's sting in a young oak leaf, which ripens into the gall-nut when the leaf is mature." A snake is not harmed by its own poison, but other harmless creatures are affected by it, so an evil-minded man, who already has the poison of sin in him, is not so much harmed by the poisonous influence exerted by an evil man as is a good-minded man.

2. The upas tree of Java and the poisonous ivy of America produce a kind of noxious juice or oil which is carried round on the wind, and brings dangerous and wasting disease to all who come within its radius.

So, in some unrecognised way, the poisonous evil effect of the lives of evil men spreads out on all sides, bearing to many spiritual disease and death.

3. It has been noted that borers that eat the stoutest timbers, and marine worms that bore the rocks, are extremely soft and delicate. Yet in time they absolutely destroy the hard wood and stones. So, if we do not watch, and, with the help of God, destroy those evil thoughts and habits which appear so negligible, then they, like the borer, will leave nothing but the shell of our spiritual life.

4. Poisonous reptiles and insects, like snakes and scorpions, strike and wound, and then from their poison glands inject the wounds, and cause death or suffering; but flies and vermin, not counted as dangerous, are really no less deadly, for by acting as carriers of the germs of disease they spread it everywhere and bring about the death of multitudes. So we would not class many men as dangerous criminals who are really

just as bad, for, unperceived by others, they use their unbridled tongues to spread around the taint of deadly doctrines and influences.

5. There is a certain insect which bores into unripe fruit and lays its eggs there, and as the fruit develops, the hole on the outside becomes closed. Later on the eggs hatch out, and the tiny grubs begin to feed on the fruit. Outwardly there is no sign. The fruit looks ripe and tempting, but inside it is hollow and useless. In a like way, evil ideas and habits which we contract in childhood and youth steadily increase, and, working in our innermost souls, corrupt our moral nature. So must we, from our earliest days, be on the watch against the sin that depraves our natures.

In Mexico there is a kind of bean known as " the jumping bean ", which, when the heat of the sun falls on it, begins to twist and turn about until it reaches the shade of a stone or bush. The explanation of this strange fact is that a certain insect has bored into the bean and, by feeding on it, has

grown till the pod is hollow. When the heat of the sun falls on it, it struggles to escape, and turns the bean-pod over and over till it happens to reach the shade, where its struggles are calmed by the cool of the shadow. In the same way, evil thoughts and desires enter into human hearts, and when the Sun of Righteousness sheds His light on the sinful life the sinner is disquieted and seeks to escape into the darkness, where His rays do not shine, and so does he live in the outer darkness and lose God's light and heat.

6. Since God has made man in His own likeness, there is nothing that can hurt him, if he fulfils this one condition, that in the exercise of his free will he does not entangle himself in sin. We do no sort of harm to God if we sin, but we do injure ourselves, and those related to us. The God of Love desires that we may be saved from sin in all its forms, so that we may enjoy His fellowship, but sin excludes us from this holy association with God. Then between individuals there is such a close relation that

our injury becomes the injury of others, and another's injury becomes ours. It never has been possible, and it never will be, that we can commit evil without injuring others. To some degree or other our fellow-men are affected by the good or bad that we do. Hence the meaning of repentance is that for the future we will refrain from those deeds which are injurious both to ourselves and to others, and, with God's help and grace, as Zacchæus did, make restitution for what we have already done (Luke xix. 8-10).

CHAPTER VIII

LIFE IN CHRIST

1. Life is in the blood, and by shedding His blood Christ gives life to us. As serum is often injected for the cure of disease, so, by the application of His blood, Christ saves us from sin's deadly disease, and from death. The whole universe is a body. Every limb is connected with the whole body, so if there is pain in one part the whole body feels it. If serum is used in any particular part the whole body feels the effect of it. In this way, though Christ was crucified in this world, which is a single part of this seen and unseen universe, yet the whole universe was affected by His death. And though for the salvation of the world He was crucified

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in a single place (Jerusalem), still the whole world shares in His sacrifice. And as the spirit is in the whole body, so God is present in His whole universe. Saint Bonaventura has written: "His centre is everywhere, but His circumference is nowhere".

2. Christ was made a sinner for our sakes and died the sinner's death. The story is told of a good man who went to live among a band of evil men, in order to save them from their evil lives. Many thought that this man of God must be one of the band, and when a great crime had been committed, suspicion that he was connected with it fell on him. He was arrested, and when he was sentenced to death he received the verdict with joy. The band knew that he was altogether innocent, and after his death the thought that the man of God had died for their sakes so affected them that many of them gave up their evil ways and deeds. Thus did Jesus. His power is always active, and when sinners are influenced by His wonderful love, and repent, turning their

hearts to Him, then He uproots the evil from their souls, and gives them new life, and they become new creatures like Himself.

3. In 1921 there was a jungle fire in the Himalayas. While most of the people round were busy putting it out, I noticed several men standing looking into a tree. I asked, "What are you looking at?" They pointed to a nest full of young birds on a tree whose branches were already alight. Above it a bird was flying wildly about in great distress. They said, "We wish we could save that nest, but we can't get near it for the fire." I watched, and a few minutes later saw the nest catch fire. I thought, "Now the mother-bird will fly away," but no! I saw her fly down, spread her wings over the young, and in a few minutes she was burnt to ashes with them. I had never seen anything like it before. Then I said to those standing by, "We are amazed at this wonderful love; but, please think that when such astonishing love is seen in this little creature, how much more wonderful must His love be who has

created such an unselfish nature. The same infinite love brought Him down from heaven to become man, so that by giving His own life He might save us who were dying in our sins."

4. The proof of the truth of Christ's claims is based on the experience of countless believers. Every experienced Christian is a witness to how necessary, how fitted to his every need and how life-giving is His presence with us.

In 1922, when I was travelling in Palestine with a friend, I went to see Jacob's well, and was refreshed by drinking its sweet, fresh water. But an hour or two later I was again thirsty. Then those words of our Lord came forcibly home to my mind, that " whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life " (John iv. 13-14).

I had just drunk of Jacob's well and was

again thirsty, but I can say with all humility and thankfulness, that in the twenty years since I gave my heart to Him, and drank of that water which He gave me, I have never been thirsty, because He really is the Fountain of Life.

5. Referring to the fact that in the personality and words of Christ there is also to be found Spirit and Life (John vi. 63), Dr. Parker has well said: "Measure the religious doctrine of Jesus by that of the time and place He lived in, or that of any time and place. Consider what a work His words and deeds have wrought in the world. Remember that the greatest minds, the richest hearts, have set no loftier aim, no truer method than His of perfect love to God and man. Shall we be told such a man never lived—the whole story is a lie! Suppose that Plato and Newton never lived. But who did their wonders and thought their thoughts? What man could have fabricated a Jesus? None but a Jesus."

Mere moral philosophy—metaphysics, in-

tellectualism, or civilisation—can give no help in overcoming sin and unbridled passion. If God's grace and power is not given us, then worldly education and culture, instead of helping, merely invent new means and methods for committing sin, and for helping us to destroy one another. It is therefore urgently necessary that, for being saved from sin and its evil consequences, we should put ourselves into the hands of Him who can give us full and free salvation.

CHAPTER IX

FINALLY ALL MEN WILL RETURN TO GOD

1. "We are compelled by the constitution of our minds to believe in the existence of an Infinite and Absolute Being" (Mansel).

As in the flint there is fire, so in the heart of man there is the yearning for communion with God. This desire may be hidden under the flinty hardness of sin and ignorance, but on coming into contact with a man of God, or on being touched by the Spirit of God, at once the desire in him breaks into flame, as does the flint when struck by the steel.

A craving exists in the human soul which can be satisfied neither in this world nor in the world to come, but only in God. There-

fore when man, after having been driven hither and thither by his passions, at last repents, it is to God that he turns back.

2. God does not wish that we should try to prove His existence by the feeble arguments of our limited intellects. Had He wished this, He Himself would not have remained silent. He could at any time have given proofs convincing beyond anything we can imagine. But it is His will that His people who have enjoyed His sweet and life-giving presence should bear witness of Him, because their personal experience is a witness far more convincing than their reasoned proofs.

No man has ever seen or heard God as He is in Himself, though He has kept on speaking in all ages through apostles and prophets, and in the end has spoken to us through His Son (Heb. i. 1-2). As Philo has said: "The human voice is made to be heard, the voice of God is made to be seen. What God says consists of acts, not of words." That is, He speaks through the

book of Nature and through His creation, but the pity of it is that people do not trouble to read this book for themselves. Herbert Spencer writes: "Sad indeed is it to see how men occupy themselves with trivialities, and are indifferent to the grandest phenomena, care not to understand the architecture of the heavens, and pass by without a glance that grand epic written by the finger of God upon the strata of the earth".

3. If an idolater, worshipping a stone instead of God, feels a sort of peace, this does not signify that there is any consoling power in the stone. Yet, for some, it may be a means of concentration on God; and God does give them consolation according to their faith. But the danger is that the worshipper will not advance spiritually, and, influenced by the material environment, will be degraded himself to the deadness of the stone. And in this state he will recognise neither his nor the stone's Creator, Who, hidden behind it, can fulfil all the longings of his heart.

4. However bad and evil-living a man may be, there is in man's nature a divine spark or element which is never inclined towards sin. His conscience and spiritual feelings may become dulled and dead, but this spark of the divine is never extinguished. This is why even in depraved criminals there is always some good to be found. It has been noticed that some of those who have committed murders with the utmost violence and savagery have often generously aided the poor and oppressed. If this divine spark or element cannot be destroyed, then we can never be hopeless for any sinner. If we say that it can be destroyed, then sorrow at separation from God because of sin and the remorse of hell will never be felt, because for feeling this pain of sorrow and remorse there is nothing in man but this spark—and hell will not be hell without this feeling. And, if he feels the pain, then, being tortured by it, sooner or later it will assuredly compel him to come to God for restoration.

5. Man is a free agent, who by the wrong

use of his freedom can do great injury to himself and to others. But he cannot injure himself to the extent that he can destroy his existence, or the divine spark that is in him. No one, except the Creator, has the power to do so. And the Creator Himself will not destroy it, for had He desired to destroy it He would never have created it. Even if He should, it would only prove that He had acted without foreknowledge or full appreciation of the result. It is impossible to conceive of this in God.

Man has neither created his own soul, nor can he destroy it. The Creator has brought into being every creature for some special purpose; and when man cannot, and God will not, destroy the soul of man, and the divine spark that is in him, then, at some time, the purpose for which man was created will assuredly be fulfilled. And even though many wander and go astray in the end, they will return to Him in Whose image they have been created; for this is their final destination.

Giseler has said about this divine spark: "This spark was created with the soul in all men, and it is a clear light to them, and strives in every way against sin, and impels steadily to virtue, and presses ever back to the source from which it sprang". As the body lives by means of the soul, so the soul lives by means of God. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" (John xii. 32).

Since God has created man for His own fellowship, therefore he cannot remain eternally separate from Him.

CHAPTER X

MORALITY AND BEAUTY

1. God is the foundation and life of all morality, because He is the source of all good. Without God moral life is like a stone—beautiful, but cold and lifeless. That man alone who retains his contact with God unbroken can make progress in all goodness and truth, which is the beauty of the soul. But he who does not trust in God is like the shifting sand-dune which is drifted here to-day and there to-morrow, as the gusts of the wind and the force of the storm drive it hither and thither, and leave it without any fixed spot on which it can remain.

2. By living in the presence of God and knowing Him, we learn to know also about

our own nature and being, and without this help we should always remain ignorant of the reality of what we are. The Chinese philosopher Chuang Tsu once said: "Once upon a time I dreamed I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. Suddenly I awakened. There I lay, myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming that I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly dreaming I am a man." Now, consider. If a man has no true knowledge of his own being, then what distinction between good and evil, virtue and vice, will he be able to make?

3. Confucius has a strange idea about righteousness and morality. One of the feudal princes was boasting to Confucius of the high level of morality which prevailed in his own state. "Among us here", he said, "you will find upright men. If a father has stolen a sheep, his son will give evidence against him." "In my part of the country", replied Confucius, "there is a

different standard from this. A father will shield his son, and a son will shield his father. It is thus that uprightness will be found." And Confucius has said again, "A man who should be without reproach in regard to the main principles of human conduct, might fairly be excused lapses in regard to smaller issues". Compare with this the purer teaching of Christ, Who said, "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much" (Luke xvi. 10). The teaching that Confucius gave in a negative form, "Do not unto others what you would not that they should do unto you", Christ gave in a positive form: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matt. vii. 12). There are many things of which the doing is sin; but there are also many things of which the not doing is sin, as, for example, to love the Lord God with heart and soul, and to love one's neighbour as oneself.

4. Real spiritual beauty is the unbounded

love, and glory, and goodness of God. But as He is always present in His creation, His active participation in His world manifests itself in various forms of physical beauty. In other words, we might say that in the world, or Creation, physical beauty is a reflection, or picture of an inner and hidden spiritual beauty. Emerson has said: "Every appearance of nature corresponds to some state of mind, and that state of mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture". Carritt says: "It (Beauty) is a salt without which life would be savourless". And this beauty is a manifestation of truth and goodness, whether in flower or fruit, mountain or lake, poetry or prose, art or music, or in good works. When this beauty touches our dormant and repressed emotions we can enjoy it, but only to the extent that we have the capacity in us for its appreciation. As, for example, the prophets going up to prophesy (1 Sam. x. 5; xvi. 23; 2 Kings iii. 15) felt the inspiration of music as an aid

to the revelation of truth, and we feel that the beauty of music directs our hearts back to the Truth, and aids in His worship those who have the capacity for feeling its uplift.

5. The connection between Morality and Beauty is fundamental, for truth is the source of both, and both will be found in those in whom the truth dwells. Beauty exists in other animate and inanimate things as well. Now, if these attributes are not found in man, who is superior to other creatures, then he must be inferior to the lower creatures, and even to lifeless things, sin in him having worked out in a nature debased and unsightly.

Consciously or unconsciously, the effect of the good and beautiful lives of those in whose hearts the Truth (God) dwells will be felt.

Once on my way to Tibet, I stopped at a mountain village. The people in it were very dirty and unwashed. I noticed a boy examining me intently. Then I saw him hold out his hands to compare them with mine. He said nothing, but in a little time

he went out, and I saw him washing his hands at a stream. Then he came back and again compared his washed hands with mine. Without any word from me he had been impressed by the cleanness of my hands, and the desire was born in him to have his hands equally clean. In the same way our lives, influenced by our contact with our Heavenly Father, are silently having their effect on the lives of those around. How necessary it is, therefore, that in our lives we should show forth the virtues and glory of our Heavenly Father (Matt. v. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 9).

CHAPTER XI

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1. The Lord has said that until a man is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Let alone "entering", he cannot even see it. The bodily eyes see only physical and material things. But God is a Spirit, and to see Him and His Spiritual Kingdom we must be born of the Spirit (John iii. 5-6), and then not only will our spiritual eyes see Him, but we shall also reign with Him.

When a man repents of his sin and turns to God, then the Spirit of God works in him, and he is born anew and becomes a new creature, and then and there the Kingdom of God, or Paradise, begins in him. Christ said to the thief on the Cross, "To-day shalt

thou be with Me in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43). This shows that the Lord had full knowledge of and authority over Paradise. He did not say, "Perhaps after some time you will be with Me in Paradise," nor that, "I shall go there first and get permission from God, and then arrange for you," but as an owner speaking with authority of His rightful possession He gave this comfort to the dying thief, and took this the firstfruits of His Cross with Him into Paradise. So those who now are crucified to sin and the world with Him are on that very day born again, and, entering Paradise, or the Kingdom of God, feel a wonderful joy and peace in their hearts. Worldly-minded men can neither "see" the peace of Paradise, nor can they understand what is the meaning of this new birth, or of the Kingdom of God.

2. The Lord gives every man his chance to repent, and be born anew, and enter into the Kingdom of God. He knew what kind of man Judas Iscariot was, and how he would betray Him. Still He did not treat him with

harshness, but gave him the precious opportunity of living with Him. No one can say that He did not give an evil man his chance. But Judas committed the great folly, that, instead of repenting of his sin and coming back to Christ, he went out and hanged himself. So nowadays there are many who commit Judas's sin, and instead of entering into Paradise and the Kingdom of God, they go to their own place, and are punished (Acts i. 25).

" His own place ", or hell, means a condition in which man by the exercise of his own free will, in disobedience to God, creates a state of suffering within himself. Hell is not the name of a particular place, because if it is a place, then God, Who is present in every place, would then have one part of His being in hell—and that can never be possible. But hell is a state which does not exist in God, and the true worshipper, who is in spiritual union with God, will be saved for ever from this state of sin and its suffering.

Wherever God is there is heaven, or the Kingdom of God, but God is present everywhere, therefore heaven is everywhere. Knowing this, His true worshippers are happy everywhere, and under all conditions, whether in pain or discomfort, whether among friends or among enemies, or whether in this world or in the world to come. For they live in God, and God lives in them eternally; and this is the Kingdom of God (Luke xvii. 20-21).

Outwardly, the sinner may appear to live in a state of ease and luxury, but he can never get rid of the disquiet of his heart. If indeed he could enter heaven, that also would be hell to him, because hell is in his heart itself. He cannot enter the Kingdom of God till his heart is changed and he is born anew.

3. The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of Love. A man of God saw in a vision that he had gone into a strange country. When he arrived there he was astonished that the people of that land came out and welcomed

him with joy, as if he were a long-lost brother, or a friend who had just returned to them. He went into the city with them, and saw great mansions in which were all kinds of costly furniture, but their owners had gone out and left them open. He asked some of the men why this was, and they said, "There are no thieves here. As long as men's hearts are locked up to God, so long do they need to lock their doors. But when the door of the heart is open to God, and He lives in it, then there is no need to put a lock on any door; for where the Kingdom of God is in the heart it is the kingdom of love, where each serves the other in love and desires only his good. Once there were two brothers here. The younger brother learned that the elder had need of some goods, so he took a quantity and set out to take them to his brother's house. It also happened that the same thought of helping the younger had occurred to the elder brother. They were moved by love alone, and without either saying anything to the other, each set out for

the other's house with some goods. They met on the road. When each saw the unselfish love of the other, they embraced in real happiness. This is the way we should help and love one another, and seek the good of our fellow-men."

When the stranger had gone on a little farther, he saw a man and an angel meet as true brothers, and begin with one heart worshipping Christ, the Incarnation of Love. On seeing this the stranger's heart was filled with inexpressible love and happiness, and instinctively he exclaimed, " Without doubt this is the Kingdom of God, and our real and eternal home for which the heart of man longs." Although heaven begins in man's heart while he is in the world, yet it continues beyond this life in that state where there is neither suffering, nor pain, nor death, nor tears, but endless life and unbroken joy.

CHAPTER XII

SERVICE AND SACRIFICE

1. God is always active in creating and in sustaining His creation (John v. 17). His works never cease. We see them in the circulation of the blood and in respiration, which go on unceasingly in living creatures. Again, we see them in His inanimate creation. In air, water, earth, sun, and stars there is a constant ordered movement as they fulfil the purpose of their Creator. Why should we then, who are called the sons of God and are, in fact, in every way superior to all His insentient creation, neglect and carelessly fall short of the definite work which our Creator has, in His mercy and providence, allocated for us?

2. Satan has none of the impetus of a righteous cause to help him, but he works incessantly. He is busy day and night in leading people astray. How the Serpent, which brought about the Fall of Eve, still creeps about, without even hands and feet! Then if we, who are the followers of Truth and have received the commission of God and the power of the Spirit, neglect our blessed work, we are indeed inferior and are worse than Satan and the Serpent (Eph. vi. 10-18). So let us be wide awake and watchful and get our strength from God by which to overcome Satan and evil, and faithfully to accomplish and complete our definite work (2 Tim. iv. 4-5; Jas. iv. 7).

3. A Sufi, or mystic, on a journey had with him a quantity of wheat. When he had been on the road for several days he opened the bags and found in them a number of ants. He sat down and pondered over their evil plight, and being overcome with pity for the little lost creatures, he retraced his steps and returned them safe to their

original home. Perhaps it is possible that a man should show such sympathy with helpless insects. But how is it that we so deplorably lack sympathy and fellow-feeling in our dealing with men who, made in the image of God, have gone astray like the Prodigal Son and the Lost Sheep? Surely it is a bounden duty that they should be brought back to the way of righteousness and returned to their Father's eternal home.

Once in the Hills I saw an ant running round looking for food. It found a seed which it merely touched and at once went off again. I thought that the seed was perhaps bad or sour, but no! In a little while back it came with a number of its companions. It had no thought of keeping the food to itself, but wished them to share in it.

Selfish man should learn the lesson of the ant. Those who have received all kinds of spiritual blessing from living with God should take His word to those who have not heard of Him, that they also may receive

the fellowship and blessings of God and eternal joy.

4. A poor French sculptor had just completed a very beautiful clay model. That night it became bitterly cold and wet, and he was afraid that the model might be damaged by the frost. At length he took his blankets, and, wrapping them round the model, lay down again. In the morning he was found dead, but the model was intact. When there are people among us like this, who are willing to give their lives for the work of their hands, and for lifeless things, then how much more willing should we be to spend our lives for those living souls whom God has created in His own image (1 John iii. 16).

5. Until a lump of salt is dissolved it cannot salt a single grain of pulse, and till the sun's heat has melted the snow of the mountains it cannot flow down and irrigate the sun-dried and thirsty plain, nor can that snow be drawn as water vapour to form clouds from which it can come down as rain

to make the thirsty land green and fruitful. So if we are not melted by the heat of the Sun of Righteousness and by the fire of the Holy Spirit (that is, if we are not tried by self-denial and sacrifice), then we can neither quench the thirst of any famished soul, nor bring him to the Fountain of Life, where he will be satisfied and made alive for ever.

6. We cannot serve the Creator and His creatures without meeting difficulty and temptation, but we can make no spiritual progress unless we meet them. In the world no man is free from them, and one who does not endure temptation is, as Aristotle has said, " either a beast or a god ".

Difficulties and troubles are the cross that we have to bear, but through bearing them life and countless blessings come to us. For, as birds carry wings and wings carry birds, so experience tells us that he who with joy takes up his cross is himself lifted up by it, and borne safely along, until he reaches his final destination.

7. We must consider family and other

duties as included in these difficulties. Some fail to understand this, and look on them as a burden or a hindrance. Angelo of Foligno, on the death of her mother, husband, and children, " congratulated herself ", as she considered that they were " great obstacles in the way of God ". To fulfil all these duties with self-sacrifice is just as much the Will of God for us as to spend our days in prayers, fasts, and vigils.

Experience teaches us that in helping others along we help ourselves, and reach a wonderful contentment in our own souls—a fact which shows clearly that we have an intimate connection with others, and that all progress is based on mutual help and service. We may count this as the rule of our very existence, for if we are self-centred and act in opposition to this rule, both we and our neighbours will find less joy in life, and through the conflict of our self-interests we will destroy one another. Let us take this principle of service as the Golden Rule of our lives, and " in love serve one another ".

Without self-denial it is impossible to serve God, and, as we mentioned before in the first chapter, we should first learn to live our lives with the Lord in secret, and learn the lesson of love while we sit at His feet. Then let us go out and love and serve our fellow-beings as we love our own selves. And in doing this we fulfil in our lives now the Purpose and Will of our Creator and Lord, and shall continue to fulfil it through all eternity.

THE END

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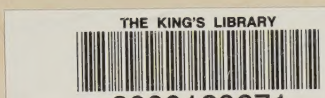

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